

HISTORY OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN NATURALISTS' CLUB

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I. INTRODUCTION

The history of the Western Australian Naturalists' Club falls naturally into three phases. During the first phase (1924-30), the period of establishment, it was a coterie of experts. Membership was small but the aims and activities then formulated remain substantially the same to this day. The second phase (1931-34) was a period of crisis and recovery. Membership increased and the new members on the executive sought to develop the social activities of the Club, making changes that brought about dissension. The third phase (1935-45) was a period of re-establishment from those difficult times. It also includes the interruptions of World War II and the subsequent success and expansion to the modern era (1946 onwards) with its popular Wild Life Shows and the publication of its official journal, the *Western Australian Naturalist*. However, we will close our history at the dawn of this modern period and will review events and personalities from the Club's beginnings until the post-war revival.

II. THE FOUNDATION YEARS

1. Inauguration

During the forty years from its inception to the present day the W.A. Naturalists' Club has grown from a small group of dedicated naturalists to a large and popular body. The pattern of the meetings has changed to suit the altered circumstances. The original members were all experts, many of them professionals of standing, or knowledgeable amateurs in their respective fields. Today, those of them who remain with us may be pardoned for recalling wistfully the meetings of the early years when small membership permitted lively and informed discussions, when every member participated and when opinions were of high scientific value.

After two preliminary committee meetings, the inaugural meeting was held on July 3, 1924, at 11 Chatsworth Road, Highgate, the residence of Mr. A. Blain, a businessman whose hobby was microscopy. The meeting had not been publicised because of the known opposition of some members of the Royal Society of Western Australia, who feared that a Naturalists' Club would compete with them for members. However, most of the foundation members at this meeting were members of the Royal Society and they felt there was need for an association with a more popular appeal.

2. The Pioneers

Three men were the prime movers. W. M. Carne, botanist in the Agricultural Department, was a likeable character, ruddy and thickset, a sturdy solid type. His associate was John Clark, Assistant Government Entomologist, who was to become, when on the staff of the National Museum, Melbourne, an authority on ants. He was a self-taught and self-sufficient Scot, inclined to be jealous and quarrel-

some with his colleagues and superiors but always generous with younger men whom he was keen to help.* The third was D. L. Serventy, a brown-eyed, eager young student who had already adopted ornithology as his special field. He was serving his apprenticeship as a journalist on *The Farmer*, conducting a natural history column under the pen-name of "Miletus." (At that time, Col. C. Battye of the Public Library, a big hearty man with a mincing walk, conducted a similar column as "Senex" in the *Sunday Times*, James Pollard was "Mo'poke" in *The West Australian* and Mrs. E. H. Pelloe was "Ixia" in the same newspaper.) Many country naturalists corresponded with Serventy through his column and he was frequently in touch with the Government experts in the city.

Clark and Carne were quick to feed his ardour for the idea of establishing a naturalists' club and gave him the addresses of similar bodies in the Eastern States. From these clubs he obtained copies of constitutions as well as information concerning club management and activities. Thus armed he corresponded with country enthusiasts and approached known interested people in the city. Finally, as stated above, a small meeting was held at the residence of Blain, a friend of Clark's.

Carne acted as chairman during the election of officers. C. G. Hamilton (of the Education Department), son of a noted naturalist in New South Wales and himself a good all-round naturalist, was elected President. Carne was Vice-President and Serventy was Secretary-Treasurer, an office he held for three successive important years.

3. Foundation Members

A study of the list of foundation members makes interesting reading. Apart from Hamilton, Carne, Serventy, Clark and Blain, only two others were present at the meeting, A. R. Kierath (of the Postmaster-General's Department, a friend of Clark's, who came and went like a meteor during the first year of the Club's existence), and Otto Lipfert, a skilful taxidermist and field collector at the Museum. He was a small, dark, brown-eyed man with moustache and a balding head. Of a retiring nature and shy in public, he was too diffident to take higher office but served faithfully as a member of the Council until 1937 (he died in 1942). He stood in some awe of his chief at the Museum but in the field was an excellent bushman and was invaluable on Club excursions.

Absent members who enrolled at the first meeting were Bruce W. Leake, an ornithologist of Kellerberrin; J. W. Hall, an amateur botanist and beekeeper, employed at a State sawmill at Manjimup

*Clark was surrounded by a coterie of budding naturalists, many of whom he brought with him into the new Club. At his home, at 54 Jewell Street, East Perth, he would teach them how to prepare microscope slides and other techniques. One visitor at the time, recorded in his diary his impressions of his first call there: "He has a most remarkably stocked room, with tubes, a couple of microscopes and other scientific impedimenta. Having been a carpenter previously, he is handy with tools and manufactures a good deal of his apparatus. His wife sat patiently in the room, proud of her husband's work, but yet a little weary and as she whimsically said in answer to a laudatory comment of mine, 'Yes, but it has kept us dog poor'." He also taught himself several modern languages to read directly published papers on ants. When the family moved to Victoria later, a daughter of this remarkable man, Ellen, also became an accomplished naturalist, doing notable work on the Australian freshwater crayfishes.

(he sent numerous letters and exhibits to meetings); W. H. Mathews, Statistician's Department, who made an absorbing study of ant-lions and lacewings, he was a quiet, studious man with unsuspected deep religious convictions and he could never quite reconcile Clark's more fiery character with his lot as a Government employee; L. J. Newman (Government Entomologist) and C. A. Gardner (Assistant Economic Botanist); H. L. Cailles, Government Apiculturist; W. H. Loaring, ornithologist of Bickley, a very retiring man but a meticulous observer; and L. Glauert of the Museum, already a dominant figure in natural history circles, tall and lean with quizzical blue eyes, positive in his views, as ready to give information as he was quick to extract it from those who sought him out.

4. Business of First Meeting

When the list of absent members had been read the meeting settled down to business. Having decided on the name "Western Australian Naturalists' Club," and on the day of regular meeting as the last Friday of the month (belatedly altered to the first Friday after February 1931 to suit members who wished to attend meetings of the Historical Society), and having tentatively fixed the subscription fees, the meeting then turned to the really interesting business of allotting duties.

5. Recorders

It was decided that members should nominate themselves as recorders whose duties would be to name and discuss specimens or items of interest brought forward by members, and to keep records of notes, papers, data, etc. It was found during the early years that exhibits and letters were numerous and interesting, invoking much informal discussion. In July 1925 it was decided that when difficult specimens were tabled they need not be discussed until the following meeting. Recorders listed at the first meeting were as follows: Clark (beetles, ants, termites), Carne (fungi, weeds, economic plants), Lipfert (mammals and reptiles), Serventy (birds), Blain (microscopy), Kierath (mineralogy), and Hamilton (general natural history not treated by others). To these were added at the second meeting (held at the Council Chambers in the Perth Town Hall on July 25, 1924) Gardner (native flora), Newman (economic insects), Glauert (Crustacea, scorpions, Myriapoda, palaeontology), Col. Battye (co-recorder with Hamilton), McKail (marine zoology), Loaring (co-recorder with Serventy) and Mathews (Neuroptera). What a galaxy of talent endowed the Club at its birth—every member a star.

6. Meeting Places

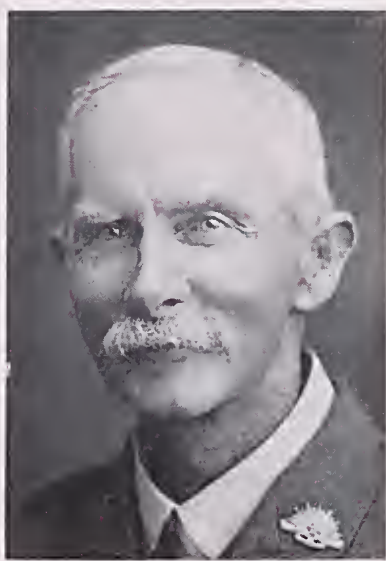
The question of a meeting room was left in Clark's and Carne's hands. As the Perth Council Chambers were not available after the Club's second meeting, Hal McKail, who was Science Master at Perth Boys' School in James Street, offered the use of his science room, subject to the approval of his headmaster. Subsequently the Club

Note on portraits: An endeavour was made to obtain portraits of Club personalities taken at or about the time they were first actively associated with the Club. The date under each portrait, where given, is the date of the photograph.

THE FIRST FOUR PRESIDENTS



C. G. Hamilton
c. 1920



Lt.-Col. B. T. Goadby
c. 1923



W. H. Mathews
1937



O. H. Sargent
1925

(see footnote opposite)

offered the Education Department a fee as a means of having authority over a caretaker who sometimes locked them out, but the terms when known were not acceptable and the science room was used only until August 1925. McKail was a striking personality. Swarthy and slight, he was a born leader of youth and his memory today is revered by the thousands who were boys in his charge. He was the first to recognise the needs of the junior members of the Club. A man of many interests, and a leader in the Boy Scout movement, he was unable to devote all the time that he wished to natural history.

From September 1925 until March 1928 the meetings of the Club were conducted in various lecture rooms of the old University buildings in Irwin Street, known as "Tin Pan Alley." The fee was 7/6 a meeting. After that the Club was granted permission by the Museum authorities to use the Royal Society's Lecture Room. A sum of 6/- per meeting was to be paid to the cleaner for his services. The room was granted rent free and a locker was made available for books and stationery. C. F. H. Jenkins, the future Government Entomologist, was a cadet at the Museum at this time and became the Club Secretary. He was a keen student of birds as well as insects and was very active on the Exhibition Committees.

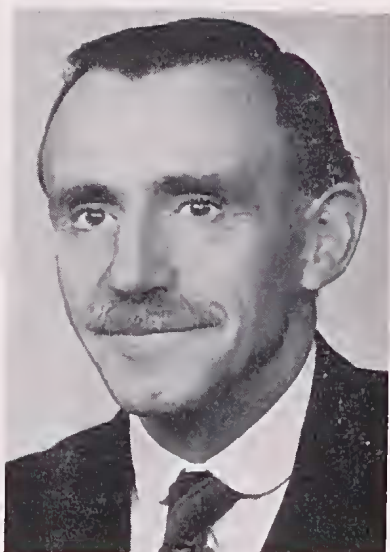
Although the Museum was felt to be the spiritual home for a naturalists' club it offered few material amenities for the pursuits of its members. However, except for eighteen months of 1932-3, during the troubled second phase of its history, the Club continued to meet at the Museum until it acquired its own premises in 1962.

The Museum Lecture Room was poorly lit, drab, uncomfortable and cramped. In 1936 Council procured a eupboard to house its growing library but there was never enough storage space for its possessions. In 1939 an unco-operative caretaker irked Council to the point of discussing the matter of a different meeting place but matters were smoothed over. Alternative quarters were not available. After the War improvements were necessitated by the rapid rise in membership. The Museum Trustees were persuaded to remove a partition and install better lights. They also gave permission to the Club to repaint and renovate the meeting room. A special meeting room and headquarters of their own became a wistful dream for Club members. It was suddenly realised when in 1962 a hall in Merriwa Street, Nedlands, was offered for £3,500 and quickly purchased. A debt remains on it, which is being liquidated by profits from the Wild Life Show and donations from members and well-wishers.

7. Officers and First Council

Referring back to the business of the early meetings, Club members at the first four meetings enthusiastically discussed plans for the future. Apart from reorders and exhibits they talked of the exchange of wildflower seeds and correspondence with naturalists' clubs in the Eastern States. They arranged excursions, discussed publicity and also the publication of handbooks. There was an obvious need for rules, as well as a committee to guide and manage the affairs of the Club. A special meeting was held on October 17, 1924,

EARLY OFFICE-BEARERS



John Clark
1938



D. L. Serventy
1925



C. A. Gardner
1923



C. F. H. Jenkins
1935

to elect office-bearers for the ensuing year. The President was Hamilton, Servery continued as Secretary-Treasurer, Mathews and Kierath were elected Vice-Presidents, the latter being replaced before the next annual election by Lt.-Col. B. T. Goadby. The additional Council members were Mrs. E. H. Pelloe, the first woman to join the Club, and Messrs. Carne, E. L. Haynes, Newman and Glauert. The last-named member resigned later from pressure of work and was replaced by O. H. Sargent.

The first Council met to draw up rules a week later at the Entomological Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture, near the Government Gardens, a convenient meeting place used for many years. The second Council meeting considered the question of publishing handbooks, and reported prophetically that the project was "desirable, but difficulties of compilation and finance" prevented it. It was not until 1950 that the Club could finance its first major publication, *A Handbook of the Snakes of Western Australia*, by Glauert. Nevertheless, in 1926 a small *Collector's Guide*, edited by H. Catton Grasby, was issued free to members, a revised version of which was republished in 1951.

8. Circulars

At the third Council meeting the isolation of country members was discussed at length. It was decided to issue a small circular containing reports of Club affairs and discussions "primarily for the benefit of country members but also for the use of city members." The difficulty lay in the cost. Printers' fees exceeded the Club income.



Mrs. E. H. Pelloe, 1927

—Photo "West Australian"

A secondhand printing press was also beyond their means. The first eight issues were made on an old duplicator by D. L. Serventy and Mrs. Pelloc at the latter's home in King's Park Road.

Mrs. Pelloe, the authoress of a fine book, *Wildflowers of Western Australia*, was already working on her coming publication, *West Australian Orchids*. Her favourite pursuit of horseriding was happily combined with her hobby of painting wildflowers as she rode through the bush in search of subjects for pen and brush. She was a very gracious lady, attractive and easy to approach. It was not long before the W.A. Naturalists' Club fostered a group of keen orchidologists including Sargent, Goadby and Mrs. C. M. and Miss Winnie Dedman.

To continue with the history of the circulars, the first appeared in July 1925 and although a monthly issue was hoped for, the second did not appear until April 1926, after which a regular service was maintained. When C. A. Gardner became Secretary (1926-27) the work was sent to a commercial typing agency. Gardner, dedicated to his life's work as a botanist, was also dynamic in his approach to Club duties. He applied much energy to Club affairs and established the format of the circular. This compact and very successful little publication, edited chiefly by Goadby, continued until the 74th issue in August 1932, when it lapsed from lack of finance during the crisis in Club affairs. Its reappearance in June 1934 marked the recovery of the Club. In 1939 the circular was dropped in favour of a leaflet setting out the programme for the year and a magazine was printed instead. The outbreak of war cut short the Council's plan to produce later magazines. The publication of a regular journal was not achieved for many years and an account of this important project must await the story of the modern phase of Club history.

9. Excursions

Saturday afternoon excursions have always been an integral part of Club life since the inauguration of the Club. At the time of the second meeting severe gales prompted the decision to hold an excursion along Leighton Beach on the following day "to investigate the material washed up by the storm." It was fitting that Glauert, leader of so many similar excursions to come, should have been elected to lead the first field party of the new Club.

A later excursion, under the leadership of Lipfert, was planned for Herdsman's Lake, then un-drained and a noted haunt of waterfowl. The Royal Society had also arranged an excursion for the same day, at the same place and beginning from the same spot. As the members of the rival bodies arrived they were faced with the necessity for sorting themselves into two separate groups before departing in opposite directions. A sudden rain squall arose and both parties hastily repaired to shelter—under the same tree. Under these circumstances the tension was relieved and both parties thoroughly enjoyed the meeting and resulting conversations. Subsequently Club members were invited to join Royal Society excursions if no other arrangements were made for them.

One early Club project that failed was the attempted transplanting of Winter Bells (*Blancoa canescens*) from Maida Vale to King's Park. A colony of these plants was threatened with extinction and the Club under the leadership of Mrs. Pilloe and Sargent rallied to the task of bringing the plants in sods to be established in the Park. The excursion, on May 1, 1926, was a success but the plants did not flourish.

During the early years the members of the Club were invited on many occasions to tea and an exhibition afternoon at the homes of enthusiast members. Among these were Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Mathews, already mentioned as a keen entomologist, and Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Prout. Prout, an itinerant photographer, was an expert with cold water aquaria, and was ever ready to assist others with their problems or help establish aquaria for interested newcomers in that tricky field. He was a gaunt, vigorous man, eccentric in his fanatical absorption in world politics and in his forecasts of impending doom for the nations. Mr. A. E. West and his daughters also often entertained Club members in their attractive home at Guildford. He had a particularly fine private museum including a world-wide collection of shells and a magnificent collection of aboriginal weapons, tools and other artifacts. Popular annual spring excursions were also made to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ilbery of Mundaring Park, where members would roam through the bush in search of treasures before repairing to a hearty afternoon tea provided by their hosts. The Zoo at South Perth was another popular place for excursions. Col. Le Souef would meet the members at the gates and conduct them to various points of interest, after which his wife would offer the company afternoon tea. The Colonel donated a set of *The Emu* to the Club, and in recognition of his services and gift he was elected an honorary life member in November 1928. Members at ordinary excursions to bush and swamp usually did not bother about refreshments but occasionally these were provided unexpectedly; after a summer excursion in 1924 to National Park a group of members "were invited by a party of the Bassendean Girls' Friendly Society to have a cup of tea with them and were pleased to do so."

Honorary life membership was conferred in November 1935 on the eminent ornithologist F. Lawson Whitlock. He served on the Council of the Club (1926-28) and exercised much influence on the members' interests at that time. With the advent of wireless he had been engaged to speak over the air on birds. His remarkable skill in imitating bird calls elevated his quiet attractive style of speech into a gripping discourse. When he retired to Bunbury he was influential in enrolling about 80 members for the Club. These in 1930 united to form the first country branch of the W.A. Naturalists' Club. He had been very active in helping to organise excursions especially along Leighton Beach and was much missed when he left Perth in September 1928.

However, interest in excursions waxed and waned, not always according to the weather. Sometimes the best organised had the poorest attendance, to the disappointment of those willing leaders who on one occasion outnumbered the other Club members who

arrived at the appointed spot. Trains, and that newly-arrived medium then known as the charabane, were used for transport, for few members owned cars in the early years. An interesting sidelight on money values at the time is provided by the secretary's note on his arrangements for an excursion in 1924: "Saw the proprietor of the Wembley charabane regarding the outing to Herdsman Lake, but his scale of fares (1/6 return) was too high so I did not close with him."

When T. P. S. Barrymore became Secretary (October 1929) an attempt was made to stimulate interest in excursions by holding an all-day Sunday excursion to Garden Island. The arrangement met with the approval of a large number of members, many of whom expressed the hope that more of a similar nature could be planned. It was the best attended excursion yet held, therefore it was a great shock to Council to receive letters of resignation from some of those members whose hospitality and leadership the Club had enjoyed in the past. One of them cancelled a proposed afternoon excursion to his home and another protested strongly against holiday excursions on Sunday "and so desecrating the Sabbath."

Although only one Council member shared these views, the rest hesitated to continue with Sunday excursions. It was also agreed that the matter should be settled without reference to a general meeting where it might have caused strife and division within the Club. After much deliberation and further meeting it was decided that Council was within its rights in holding a Sunday excursion as Rule 9 of the Constitution stated that "the general field day



John Clark (right) on an entomology excursion.

shall be on the second Saturday of the month unless otherwise determined by Council." Nevertheless, they would revert to Saturday excursions in the future.

It is indicative of the impetuous characters of Sargent and Barrymore that although the subject had been deemed by Council to be delicate ground and best avoided, these men when in office the following year planned to re-introduce an occasional Sunday excursion.

10. Lectures

Another popular Club activity which originated in the first year of its existence is that of listening to lectures by experts (of whom there was no lack). The first was delivered by Glauert in February 1925 on "The Past History of Australia as revealed by Animals of the Present Day." This was notable in introducing to the Perth scientific public the concept of Continental Drift.

Later in the year a regular programme of lectures was drawn up. Among the eminent visitors who lectured during the early years were Dr. G. A. Waterhouse and Mr. A. G. Hamilton (September 1926, attending the conference in Perth of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science); Dr. R. J. Tillyard, the eminent entomologist who in September 1929 gave a lecture on lacewings in a very captivating manner, reminding his audience of the way Fabre wrote; Dr. W. M. Wheeler, a Harvard professor and world authority on ants who in October 1931 spoke in an equally attractive way on his subject; and A. W. Canning of stock route fame who in July 1932 gave a very interesting talk on his experiences in the desert.

11. Library

The nucleus of a Club library was established round a donation of an almost complete set of *S.A. Naturalist* received from the Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society of South Australia in March 1925. Donations of papers and books by Glauert and others helped swell the collection which was at first kept in a box in McKail's science room. When W. A. ("Buzz") Farmer was appointed librarian (1925-27) the collection numbered 27 books and was housed in his office at *The West Australian* building. When Goadby assumed control of the library it was kept in a locker at the Museum where the meetings were held. When the Club severed its connection with the Museum in 1932 Glauert took umbrage and requested that all Club property be removed. After the Club once more met there the most pressing need was the proper housing of the books. The provision of bookcases and finally the institution of an index system all took time.

Since Council in later years adopted a policy of buying approved books the custody of the library became an important post.

12. Club Badge

A Club badge had been under discussion from the first. In December 1925 the question was raised in Council by Glauert who was requested to ask if Mr G. Pitt Morison (Curator of the Art Gallery) would design a badge having the Numbat as a central design. When

handed round for inspection at the general meeting, January 1926, this design met with approval and a sub-committee was empowered to go into the question of their manufacture. Badges, however, were abandoned in favour of financing the circulars.

The idea of a Club badge was always present and again in 1930 quotes for costs were obtained. Once more Council deferred the matter and there it rested until 1938 when Mathews again brought it up in Council. On this occasion Hamilton was asked to design a badge using a Kangaroo Paw as its motif. A confident council authorised the manufacture of 100 badges at the cost of £6/2/6, all of which were sold soon after their appearance in April 1939. Another lot were to be ordered but during the war years stocks were exhausted and before the post-war badges appeared the early ones became almost a collector's item.

13. Exhibitions

The Club's first Wildflower Exhibition was held in conjunction with a Church which had arranged Wildflower Exhibitions prior to the formation of a Naturalists' Club. In April 1925 Carne and Gardner were deputed by the Club to make an informal approach to the Secretary of the Flower Show Committee offering to participate in that year's show. The two bodies collaborated in staging a Flower Show that year, but in 1926 the Club did not participate with the Church. Council discussed the desirability of conducting a Wildflower Show for profit and decided against it as being "opposed to commercialisation of flora and fauna by naturalists." Instead they held a free exhibition and lecture night at the Women's Service Guild's Hall in Murray Street during Royal Show week, on October 11. It was a great success, attracted a large audience and inspired *The West Australian* (in its issue of October 13) to devote a commendatory leading article on the Club and its activities.

The matter was discussed again in 1927 when a Wildflower Exhibition was conducted (at a profit of £5/8/8) at the Burt Memorial Hall on the evening of October 19, a date chosen to suit visiting ornithologists attending the annual congress of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. On this occasion Council elected a Show Committee consisting of Mrs. Lukin (who was to be a very able Club Treasurer for several years), Miss E. Tothill (who painted insects) and Messrs. Serventy, Glauert, Mathews, Bardwell, Lipfert and Carne. Although staged in October, the month for the election of officers, the Exhibition was planned to become an annual event and was duly held at the same hall in 1928 and 1929. The 1929 Exhibition was one of the official fixtures for the W.A. Centenary Year, and a special effort was made. Those members who were in the employ of the Government were entrusted with the tasks of preparing exhibits featuring the historical activities of the pioneers in natural history. This Exhibition was open to the public during the afternoon as well as the evening and was such a success that members who believed it should have been held in the Town Hall won their point. The Exhibitions of 1930 and 1931 at the Town Hall were conducted by a permanent Exhibition Committee (W. H. Brabant, hon. secretary, H. McKail, O. H. Sargent, C. F. H. Jenkins with ex officio members

the President and Secretary of the Club). In 1931 for the first time more than 1,000 people attended. The profit, judged by later years' achievements, was meagre; just over £10 and that chiefly from a buffet organised by the women of the Club.

Club funds were kept low by the printing of the circular, and members had been asked to lend £12 to help stage the Exhibition. The most enthusiastic member did not then imagine future exhibitions would become the source of revenue to finance the most cherished projects of the Club.

During the critical year of 1932 the exhibition was a fiasco. An effort was made early in the year to raise funds for staging it. A social committee with bright ideas was empowered by the Club to organize a Children's Pageant Ball in April. The connection between a children's ball and the activities of a naturalists' club is not very obvious, but it was to be stressed by the rule that the children should be dressed to represent wildflowers or animals native to W.A. It may be that this strained the parents' ingenuity, interest and imagination; or the weather may not have been kind; the ball proved to be impractical and a failure. Club finance suffered to such an extent that the circulars were discontinued in September, leaving the Club much in debt.

During 1933 when the Club was struggling to keep its head above water some members hopefully discussed the continuation of wildflower shows, but Council explained the financial burden yet to be cleared and quietly introduced quarterly Club exhibitions and conversaciones. Shows were dropped and not reintroduced until 1939.

III. CRISIS

It had become evident over the years that holding both the Show and the Annual Meeting in October was inconvenient. The obvious solution was put forward for consideration by O. H. Sargent when in February 1931 he proposed that the annual meeting be held in December, and suggested that it should be conducted in some place where refreshments could be obtained after the meeting. Sargent was a vigorous if hasty member. Of remarkable appearance with an imposing head set on a pygmy body, he was ambitious and self-confident, also quick-tempered and biased, rousing enmity easily, but possessed a wonderful ability and enthusiasm for detailed scientific research.

His proposal, although unanimously accepted, was ill-starred. The December meeting was duly held at the R.S.L. Dining Rooms and the election of officers proceeded with. The next Council meeting was poorly attended. Nevertheless, the Secretary arranged the following Club meeting to be held at the Cave Dining Rooms. On hearing this, Glauert wrote with some feeling, asking that the Club's books and papers be removed from the Museum at the earliest convenience. The March meeting was held at the Leisure Hour Dining Rooms which offered a cheaper rental as well as a cupboard for the Club Library. Here the Club gathered until June 1933 when once again it was permitted to use the Lecture Room at the Museum.

The uprooting of the Club from its accustomed quarters at the Museum and the transplanting to the social atmosphere of a dining

room dissatisfied many old members. They grew uneasy as they saw the social committee's failure with the children's ball, saw the circular lapse from lack of funds, saw debts increase and the exhibition languish. The Club Treasurer was a conscientious man but he was ignored by the President and Secretary who handled the funds. Attendanees dwindled and by December the officers were unprepared for the annual general meeting. The President regretfully announced that as Council had not met there was no report or balance sheet; also as there was no other business to transact the meeting could not be held. Furthermore, no nominations had been received except for the presidency and thus no elections could be held and he appealed for further nominations. This was a grave business. The meeting was adjourned until February 1933.

Sargent may not have realised to what straits the Club had been reduced under his impetuous leadership. Barrymore refused to give up the property and books of the Club to the Council. The minute book was retrieved by stealth and the new office-bearers feared that even if the financial records were returned and could be straightened out that the Club was involved in considerable debt.

IV. RECOVERY

No record survives of that fateful February meeting. When Club business was formally resumed in March it was under the presidency of Hamilton with Miss Lorraine Williams as Secretary—soon to be succeeded by Miss Bonnie Walker who continued in this office for four years.

The new Treasurer was West, while the Vice-Presidents were Goadby and Palmer. To these stalwarts must be given much credit for pulling the Club into shape again and once more restoring faith and order.

Hamilton, although very popular, would appear not to seek office. He had already served two terms as President, during the inaugural year and in 1931. Quiet in manner and almost retiring in temperament, with a winning personality, he was also a clever artist, illustrating his lectures with lightning sketches that fascinated his audiences.

West, neatly bearded, blue-eyed and immaculately dressed always with a buttonhole, bore some resemblance to the reigning king. He was a fine manly type—a good speaker with a commanding presence that inspired confidence. His ready wit and perennial good humour were invaluable. There could have been no better choice of man to handle the difficulties that faced the treasurer at that time. His private museum has already been mentioned. He took great pride in it, and his business trips to various parts of the State invariably yielded specimens to augment his collection.

Goadby had filled every office, except that of treasurer, serving continuously since 1925 when he had stepped into Kierath's shoes as Vice-President. Although a retired officer of the Army, his bearing gave little hint of that profession except perhaps in an eagerness for action and a quiet tenacity of purpose. His absorbing interest was the study and collection of native orchids, but whereas Sargent



A. E. P. West
1935



Miss Bonnie Walker
(Mrs. E. Berger)

flourished his interest in these plants like a banner, Goadby wrapped his round him like a cloak.

C. B. Palmer also gave valuable aid at this juncture. He had been an active member since 1926 and always sought to uphold the prestige of the Club. He was an agronomist and geneticist and at meetings frequently had something new to show and tell of grasses. He had positive views and ably seconded the efforts of his fellow councilors. He possessed that ability invaluable in a committeeman of taking the long range view of any proposed action and of seeing the possible nigger in the woodpile.

During 1933 affairs gradually returned to normal. In June the Museum once more became the meeting place.

On Sargent's resignation and withdrawal to York, several former members sought re-nomination to the Club. The treasurer slowly restored order to chaotic finance and by the end of 1934 West announced that all old accounts had been paid and the Club was once more on a sound financial footing.

V. JUNIOR MEMBERS

About this time (1934) Juniors figured very prominently in Club affairs. Juniors had been accepted as members from the inception of the Club. The first to be nominated were Masters G. Chambers and A. Hamilton in March 1925, and a further eleven became members in September of the same year. However, the Seniors' interest in them was informal, and generally speaking in the early years the Juniors were "seen but not heard." It was not until 1930 that they were officially catered for when Barrymore offered a prize to the

Junior with the best essay and collection of specimens on the life history of some natural history subject.

In the following year Hamilton offered a prize for the best Junior Nature Study Diary, hoping in this way to train children to make their own observations and not rely on text-books for their information. Later when the Juniors were established as a separate body a Cup was offered for their competition by E. R. Cox, a Club member with a jewellery business in the city whose hobby was aquaria. However, in later years prizes for competitive effort were discouraged in the Club, the Juniors being urged to study nature for its own sake at their own pace, and co-operative team-work being substituted for competition between individuals.

For some years a surge of interest in nature study had been sweeping through the schools in Western Australia. The Education Department established a liaison with the Museum authorities and certain teachers conducted nature study lessons at the Museum. One wonders how much this was due to the quiet influence of Hamilton whose work in the Practising School attached to the Claremont Teachers' College was an inspiration not only to his staff but also to the successive groups of student teachers who studied his methods and example. Schools fostered Nature Study Clubs, and through *Our Rural Magazine*, a periodical for country schools, pupils in country areas were linked in interest.

The W.A. Naturalists' Club was asked to identify material forwarded by the children. In time under the enthusiastic care of Miss N. Kniep the Club built up an extensive herbarium augmented by the specimens sent in by country schoolchildren.

In July 1935 two very active country members, C. G. Jessup (of Northam) and Palmer (then stationed at Parkerville) were instrumental in forming junior branches of the Club at Muresk Agricultural College and at Parkerville.

Jessup, a slight man with a quiet manner, as well as being a naturalist of much ability was learned in the early history of the Northam settlement. He had an extensive collection of aboriginal artifacts. His habit of carrying pet snakes in his pockets and introducing them to children at meetings and natural history exhibitions earned for him a kind of notoriety that he quietly enjoyed, and he never tired of preaching the value of pet carpet snakes in farmers' sheds. His influence, direct and indirect, was widespread and valuable.

The junior branches fostered by these two men were an inspiring example. In the following year Nature Clubs in four big metropolitan schools also became affiliated. Children flocked to the monthly Club meetings at the Museum, often outnumbering the senior members. Some juniors brought specimens and were valued members but others apparently grew out of hand, and undue handling of delicate exhibits was complained of. Their behaviour offended the sense of fitness of many old members, some of whom openly expressed the opinion that the Club was fast becoming an appendage of the Education Department.

A brisk discussion took place at the Council meeting in July

1936 "regarding the recent large influx of Junior members to the Club, the subject being reviewed from various angles. It was resolved finally that for the next two months Junior members be strictly disciplined per medium of three official stewards."

Members who were wise in the ways of children knew that the real solution could be found only when the children met separately.

Hamilton offered to arrange a separate programme for the Juniors for the next two months to be conducted prior to the Senior meetings. This was followed by plans to set definite study work for the Juniors each month. The arrangement, however, did not overcome the disturbance created by Juniors when present in large numbers at the Senior meeting.

J. W. Oates, a member who was a State Education Department teacher attached to the Museum Study Classes, proposed the only solution. He had tried to interest his department in starting a branch of the Gould League in Western Australia but the department was not interested at the time. As the best alternative he decided to build up a Junior Naturalists' Club instead. A committee of interested Seniors arranged that Juniors should meet separately on the third Friday of alternate months. They were to be self-governing and in future only two Junior delegates would attend the Senior meetings. Their first meeting was held in February 1937 and by June it became obvious that monthly meetings were desirable.

In 1938 membership figures show that there were 96 Seniors and 60 Juniors with twelve schools affiliated. In 1939 there were 71 Seniors and 70 Juniors.

The Senior Club fostered the idea of a Children's Museum and began collecting information from similar institutions all over the world. This plan was interrupted by the war and came to nothing, but before the end of the year the W.A. Naturalists' Club in collaboration with the Education Department had decided to launch the Gould League of Bird Lovers in Western Australian schools. The formation of this League under the auspices of the Education Department was in the hands of some teacher members of the Club and had the wholehearted support of all.

A very creditable report by the Junior office-bearers of 1939 stated there was an average attendance of 50 Juniors and 20 Seniors (much better than the Senior meetings could claim); that 11 meetings had been held and 9 excursions; that Juniors had contributed articles to the new Club magazine and had co-operated with the Seniors at the Club's exhibitions and conversazione night; that lectures from Seniors and a Junior had been listened to and that the subjects for study included shore life, botany, insects, astronomy, pond life and birds.

At first the war made little difference. In 1940 an added feature at Junior meetings was Question Time. Also in June 1940 Mr. A. E. Levy presented an Honour Roll on which were to be inscribed the names of all Junior office-bearers.

In 1941 the problem arose of the great difference between very young Juniors and those almost adult. This was met by forming an Intermediate Section of 20 members from 15 to 20 years of age.

Then the effects of war were felt most severely. Attendance at Senior meetings had dwindled to a handful and once more Juniors over 14 years of age were admitted. In February 1942 the Junior meetings were cancelled and the Seniors cancelled their Saturday afternoon excursions. However, the need for continued activity among the Juniors was met by arranging open air meetings at Saturday excursions, the first being held at Monger's Lake. Even these lapsed in a short time.

Juniors continued to attend the Senior meetings until October 1946, when their separate meetings were once more held on the first Saturday of the month.

With the return of peace, youth movements flourished. A Youth Week was held in October 1945 and an exhibition staged in Boans' Hall. The Juniors of the Naturalists' Club were invited to participate. Council encouraged the idea, formed a committee of eleven and organised a very successful exhibit.

Two Senior members who had a great influence on the Junior members of the Club were Miss L. Serventy and Mr. G. E. H. Wright. Through the difficult war years Mr. Wright gave every assistance. He attended the youngsters' meetings regularly and should a lecturer fail to appear he had a never-ending fund of knowledge and would speak instead. He was especially keen at the open air meetings. Tall and lean with a wide white beard, he was a typical bush naturalist with pockets always full of matchboxes useful for collecting specimens. He was well loved by the children and never failed to adjure them on the use of odds and ends in constructing collecting aids. His pet hobby was the making of scrapbooks from cuttings of nature columns, and he would impress on the Juniors the value of these.

He used to tell the story of his schooldays when he came into a conflict of opinion with his teacher as to whether a certain "find" was a beetle shell or a cicada. Wright was right and the teacher was wrong, but he tried by caning to convince his pupil—to no avail, for after every stroke of the cane the boy still insisted it was a cicada and ultimately the teacher gave up the attempt. It is to Wright's credit that long before Departmental entomologists would admit its presence he recognised the invasion of Western Australia by the Cabbage White Butterfly.

The other Senior member who constantly helped the Juniors was Miss L. Serventy. She had joined the Club in 1939 and in 1941 when her brother Vincent Serventy was transferred to Northam she took over his Treasurer duties and continued in that office until 1959, except for one period while on an extended holiday. Apart from her excellent management of Club finance she took the Juniors under her wing and had not missed attending a meeting or excursion during the whole period except for the holiday abovementioned. Her annual leave was taken to coincide with the Club's Wild Life Shows so that she could take charge of the important Treasurer duties for the Show Committee—a remarkable record of devotion to the Club's interests.

It would be hard to over-estimate the value of the Junior section of the Club in fostering natural history interest in the State. Several Juniors eventually took up botany and zoology as professional careers and now hold important University and research posts in many parts of Australia. But even those who may no longer follow natural history as an active hobby are diffused widely through the community and help to mould public opinion to a better appreciation of Australia's fauna and flora and the ease of conservation generally.

VI. SUCCESS, 1934

We turn now from the development of the Junior section of the Club to trace the activities of the parent body from the time of its recovery in 1934 to the modern period of success and expansion.

A move had been made early in 1934 to lessen the amount of business at general meetings. While making Council a highly responsible body it left more time at meetings for discussions, lectures and exhibits.

The success of the members' exhibition evening at the Museum in April 1934 prompted Council to institute a regular quarterly conversazione and exhibition held usually at Arundale Hall, or on the occasion of the annual meetings at the Burt Memorial Hall. These social evenings were very popular but had to be discontinued with the onset of war. Hamilton's skill as a lightning sketcher, and A. J. Hall's beautiful watercolour drawings of plants and insects were great attractions. Hall, a retired headmaster of the Education Department, gave many entertaining talks. He was not content with the study of texts and always had insects or some other form of wild life under critical observation in specimen cages. He presented his collection of drawings, etc., to the Club just prior to his death



Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Oates at a Club excursion to National Park,
May 1938.

in June 1938. Another member who figured prominently at these evenings was Mathews who usually chose insects as his subject. On the whole, plant life and insects seemed to be supplanting temporarily birds and shells as popular studies.

Shells had received much attention from the earliest years. There were such ardent collectors as West (already mentioned) and the tall, meticulous retired lawyer E. H. Bardwell who was a precise scientific conchologist. He was the father of the two Broome pearling masters, Bernard and Beresford, also keen conchologists. So also was the Rev. H. G. Barnacle, prominent in local astronomical circles. Another conchologist member was H. Rossell, who until his death never failed to exhibit his collection at every Club show. Laterly their mantles fell to the shoulders of W. S. Browne and Barry Wilson.

Until 1938, the "old guard" of members with the help of Miss Walker as Secretary, were prominent in Club affairs; and then the names appeared among the office-bearers of two men who were to play a big part in the future. These were Vincent Serventy (Secretary) and J. W. Oates (Vice-President). Oates was a vigorous, earnest, yet pleasant man with strong principles. He was universally liked and under his presidency in 1939 Sunday excursions were once more eliminated. He had a University training and made a hobby of popularising natural history. His early death, of cancer, was an unexpected blow.

When Oates took office as President in the following year the stage was set for advancement in several long-deferred Club projects. One long-planned objective was achieved when the Club badge was issued in April.

Early in 1939 the need for a Club magazine was once more discussed. Council members were determined to publish one, and spurred on by V. Serventy decided to personally guarantee any loss that might be incurred. The new publication was to be called the *W.A. Naturalist*. Alton Waddy and Hamilton were to be co-editors. Oates was the business manager and V. Serventy was to look after the advertisements. It was to be published in time to sell at 6d. a copy at the Club's Natural History Exhibition (a title on which Oates stood firm in maintaining) in September. This was a two-day affair held at the Burt Memorial Hall and was counted a great success, being attended by 382 adults and 521 juniors, although a number of magazines were left unsold. Apart from the conventional natural history displays unusual subjects were Aborigines' foods by J. E. Hammond and nature in literature and art by Miss Bonnie Walker and C. G. Hamilton.

VII. WAR YEARS

By 1939 the Club was poised for great and rapid development but the outbreak of war prevented it. Once more the annual show was suspended and the publication of the magazine ceased after the initial issue. Honorary membership was conferred on those members who enlisted and many of them continued their study of natural history very profitably in new fields. L. Burgess (whose special in-

terest was the protection of native flora) even formed an affiliated branch of the Club in his unit. S. R. White during his sojourn in North Queensland contributed several articles to the popular monthly magazine *Wild Life*, an achievement that the W.A. Naturalists' Club was proud to record.

For civilians at home transport difficulties and blackout restrictions made attendance at meetings problematical. Membership dwindled. Nevertheless, it was decided that although a mere handful remained to carry on Club business that it would not go into recess but rather keep the Club alive ready for revival in the future.



Natural History Exhibition at Burt Memorial Hall, September 1939.

In 1942 Miss Walker became President, the first and only woman to occupy that position in the Club. She had been an able Secretary and also used her talents in the theatrical field at the Club conversaciones which she enlivened with song and sketch. Nevertheless, attendances averaged less than a dozen members.

Council met quarterly and sometimes lacked a quorum. Office-bearers were voted back into office "en bloc." They battled on with the problem of Junior member meetings. Gordon Smith, the Secretary, and Miss L. Serventy, the Treasurer, continued to arrange excellent lectures for pitifully small audiences, and despite poverty of numbers the Club spoke strongly on such public matters as Swan River beautification schemes and the preservation of wildflowers.

Except for acknowledging the Club's debt to the handful of members who nursed it through the war years, history could almost ignore that period when the Club found itself in a state of suspended animation. Those years had thinned the ranks of the old members. Goadby, Wright, Lipfert, West, Oates and Mrs. Pelloc had all passed on, but with the return of peace worthy successors were to step into their places.

VIII. THE POST-WAR PERIOD

A remarkable vigour was felt in the Club in 1946 and pre-war activities were resumed almost as though they had never been dropped. No other body of naturalists in Australia recovered so swiftly, many of them in other States were still being hampered by problems of finance and crippling costs of publication.

Much of the success of that year was due to the bold and inspiring leadership of V. Serventy. He had joined the Club late in 1936 and served as secretary 1938-40, later becoming a council member while teaching at Northam. He realised when elected to the Presidency in 1946 that by aiming high and giving the Club something big to work for he could call forth the best efforts of the members.

He advocated the staging of a big two-day exhibition in collaboration with the Gould League not only as a means of stirring the Club from the doldrums of the war years but also as a means of stimulating public interest.

The adoption of his suggested title of "Wild Life Show" against the staid preferences of others was only a small indication of his ability to convince and lead in big projects.

The show was a huge success. Over the succeeding years it expanded to a week-long popular event and has provided revenue to finance Club projects which had formerly been but wistful dreams. No further justification is needed for the reversal of the old policy of conducting a natural history exhibition for profit.

Not the least valuable aspect of the show is that even the least of the members can and does contribute his mite of effort to its success.

The list of office-bearers for 1946 sets a pattern of names that were to become familiar over the succeeding years. They included V. N. Serventy (President), S. R. White, W. S. Browne, B. Shipway, F. G. Doepel and Misses M. L. Teede (Secretary), L. Serventy (Treasurer), O. Scymour and C. Kniep. A few terms later another name appeared, whose role must loom large when the history of the modern period comes to be written. This was W. H. Butler. Harry Butler was a protege of Palmer and Jessup and he rapidly emerged as a stimulating force among the Junior members and a leader in general Club activities.

After the success of the Wild Life Show, and it was decided to devote some of the new revenue to the publication of a journal, D. L. Serventy agreed to be the editor. The journal was to be of high scientific standard and in different shape from the lone 1939 publication which resembled the Gould League magazine.

The establishment of the Gould League in 1939 was brought about by a new interest in nature study club work in the schools by the Education Department. S. R. White was transferred from the country to become its first secretary prior to his enlistment. His was a complete personality, an inspiring teacher, an all-rounder as capable with the cricket bat as with camera and pen. His nature studies included everything that came his way, reptiles, native arti-

facts or pouched mice, although he was pre-eminent as an ornithologist. He was not the only member to write for Crosbie Morrison's magazine *Wild Life* and the several contributions of Western Australian naturalists in that publication could have had some bearing on the need for a Club journal.

This journal, edited by D. L. Serventy, was planned to commence publication in June 1947 and at possibly uncertain intervals thereafter. The immense success of the Club's Wild Life Shows has, however, guaranteed its regular, quarterly publication ever since.

D. L. Serventy's services during the early years of the Club have already been mentioned. After 1929 he had become immersed in University duties that brought about a gradual withdrawal from active participation in Club affairs. He won an overseas research scholarship and in July 1931, on the eve of his departure for Europe to continue his studies, was made an honorary member of the Club during his absence. He did not return until May 1934 and was thus absent during the Club crisis. He left the State again in September 1937 and did not return as a resident until May 1943. His high professional standing and experience as a writer guaranteed that under his editorship the *W.A. Naturalist* would be a journal that would command respect in scientific circles.

In 1950 the Club was also able to publish its first handbook, *Snakes of Western Australia*, by Glauert. The illustrations were the very competent work of Olive Seymour who had served unobtrusively but most efficiently for several years as the Secretary of the Gould League. Since then six other handbooks have been published, the series forming useful introductory texts for the study of local natural history.

Inspired by the interest created in natural history by the Wild Life Show of 1947, the manager of a local radio station decided to sponsor a session of nature talks and the Club was asked to provide a panel of naturalists to conduct it.

The growth of interest in nature study in Australia is epitomised by the annual award of the Natural History Medallion to an outstanding naturalist. Two Club members have been recipients of this honour, Glauert in 1949 and D. L. Serventy in 1956. Glauert's award was made in the twenty-fifth year of the *W.A. Naturalists' Club's* existence and members felt that the conferring of this honour on one of their oldest members was an appropriately fitting occasion in a memorable year.

In the Club at the present time there is a remarkable integration of talent and interest between amateur and professional naturalists that is unique in Australia. Professional men and women from the University, the Education Department, various officers of State Government Departments and the C.S.I.R.O. combine with an eager body of amateurs in an active and fruitful Club life.

The number of contributors to the journal and the great range of topics covered indicate this but perhaps nowhere is it so evident as in the staging of the annual Wild Life Shows where the work and duties are shared to every member's ability.

The need for active field naturalists has never been greater than today. As a leading scientific paper warns us: "The statement that all data in natural history are vanishing data has seldom been so obviously true. The need to collect, collate and conserve the materials of nature is urgent."* Towards this objective the pages of the *W.A. Naturalist* are actively devoted.

OFFICE-BEARERS, W.A. NATURALISTS' CLUB, 1924-1964

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer
1924	C. G. Hamilton	D. L. Serventy (Sec.-Treas.)	
1924-25	C. G. Hamilton	D. L. Serventy (Sec.-Treas.)	
1925-26	B. T. Goadby	D. L. Serventy	W. M. Carne
1926-27	B. T. Goadby	C. A. Gardner	W. M. Carne
1927-28	W. H. Mathews	B. T. Goadby	W. M. Carne
1928-29	O. H. Sargent	B. T. Goadby	Mrs. M. R. Lukin
1929-30	L. Glauert	T. P. S. Barrymore	Mrs. M. R. Lukin
1930-31	C. G. Hamilton	C. F. H. Jenkins	L. Glauert
1931-32	O. H. Sargent	T. P. S. Barrymore	J. Widmer
1933	C. G. Hamilton	Miss L. Williams & Miss B. Walker	A. E. P. West
1934	C. G. Hamilton	Miss B. Walker	A. E. P. West
1934-35	A. E. P. West	Miss B. Walker	G. Wright
1935-36	B. T. Goadby	Miss B. Walker	F. L. Parsons
1936-37	W. H. Mathews	W. J. Mangin	F. L. Parsons
1937-38	W. C. Thomas	V. N. Serventy	Miss B. Halkyard
1938-39	J. W. Oates	V. N. Serventy	Miss B. Halkyard
1939-40	C. G. Hamilton	V. N. Serventy	Miss B. Halkyard
1940-41	J. W. Oates	A. Crompton	V. N. Serventy
1941-42	Miss B. Walker	G. G. Smith	Miss L. Serventy
1942-43	Miss B. Walker	G. G. Smith	Miss L. Serventy
1943-44	Miss B. Walker	G. G. Smith	Miss L. Serventy
1944-45	C. B. Palmer	G. G. Smith & L. Burgess	Miss L. Serventy
1945-46	V. N. Serventy	Miss M. L. Teede	Miss L. Serventy
1946-47	V. N. Serventy	Miss M. L. Teede	Miss L. Serventy
1947-48	B. Shipway	A. R. Main	Miss L. Serventy
1948-49	B. Shipway	A. R. Main	Miss L. Serventy
1949-50	A. R. Main	Miss B. York	Miss L. Serventy
1950-51	J. Gentilli	D. Reid	Miss L. Serventy
1951-52	V. N. Serventy	Miss J. Russell	Mrs. I. Charles
1952-53	V. N. Serventy	A. K. Lee	Miss L. Serventy
1953-54	A. R. Main	A. K. Lee	Miss L. Serventy
1954-55	A. R. Main	J. H. Calaby	Miss L. Serventy
1955-56	R. D. Royce	J. H. Calaby	Miss L. Serventy
1956-57	R. D. Royce	Mrs. C. M. Serventy	Miss L. Serventy
1957-58	V. N. Serventy	E. J. Garratt	Miss L. Serventy
1958-59	W. H. Butler	E. J. Garratt	Miss L. Serventy
1959-60	W. H. Butler	E. J. Garratt	J. S. Serventy
1960-61	L. N. McKenna	J. Gentilli & G. E. B. Barrett	J. S. Serventy
1961-62	L. N. McKenna	G. E. B. Barrett	J. S. Serventy
1962-63	D. L. Serventy	G. E. B. Barrett	J. S. Serventy
1963-64	D. L. Serventy	J. R. Ford	J. S. Serventy

*From a discussion of local field societies established in England after Darwin's day and a need for their former activity. *The Council for Nature, Nature*, March 29, 1958: 867-868.